

# Good Practices in Labour Training and Socio-Economic Inclusion for Migrants and Refugees (2020–2024)

**Montevideo, Uruguay**

May 2025



# Introduction

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This Compilation of Good Practices presents actions developed by Casa de la Mujer de la Unión (CMU), implemented in coordination with the Secretary for Ethnic-Racial Equity and Migrant Populations (SEERPM for its acronym in Spanish) of the Municipality of Montevideo and with the technical and financial support of UNHCR. The experiences show how the articulation between labour training and inter-institutional alliances can transform the lives of refugees, asylum seekers, displaced and stateless people in Uruguay. The purpose of the document is twofold: on the one hand, to systematise the lessons learned between 2020 and 2024 in initiatives on capacity building,

labour intermediation and educational accreditation; on the other hand, to inspire local governments, civil society organisations, the private sector and international agencies to adapt and replicate approaches that link socio-economic inclusion, protection of rights and local development. Each practice is presented in a concise and operational manner, with information on its context, the actors involved, the implementation steps, the results achieved, and the qualitative impact observed, as well as the challenges faced, and lessons learned. In addition, testimonials from participants and partners are included to illustrate the human value behind the quantitative data.

We trust that these pages will offer useful ideas and tools to strengthen integration policies and programmes in other territories across Latin America. For any inquiries or to exchange experiences, the technical teams of each institution remain at full disposal.

## Partners involved

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**Casa de la Mujer de la Unión (CMU)** is social not-for-profit organisation from Uruguay that, since 1987, has promoted gender equity and the full exercise of civil rights. It develops professional training programmes, labour skills development, human rights education, and violence prevention initiatives, engaging with public and private actors to incorporate a gender perspective into social policies and to improve the quality of life of women and men.

**Secretary for Ethnic-Racial Equity and Migrant Populations (SEERPM)**, part of the Division of Social Policies of the Municipality of Montevideo, is responsible for designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the policies, programmes, projects, and actions related to ethnic minorities and migrant populations within Montevideo. The Secretary works to ensure equitable access (particularly for Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and migrant populations) to municipal services, promotes the elimination of discrimination and inequalities, and fosters the participation of organized civil society and the empowerment of women.

**The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** is the UN agency mandated to protect refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, and stateless individuals. In Uruguay, UNHCR leads the Solidarity Cities initiative, enhancing the role of local governments in the integration of displaced populations by providing technical assistance, regional coordination, and resources to strengthen inclusive public policies.

# Context of the Cities of Solidarity initiative in Montevideo

In the Americas, most refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons settle in urban or peri-urban areas in search of safety, employment, education, healthcare, and better living conditions. This reality grants local governments a decisive role in reception, protection, and integration efforts. To recognize and strengthen this leadership, States in the region launched the Cities of Solidarity in the Americas initiative—agreed upon in the Mexico Plan of Action (2004) and the Brazil Plan of Action (2014)—which promotes coordination among local actors to ensure access to services, labour market integration, and social cohesion.

Since 2009, Montevideo has been an active member of the Cities of Solidarity in the Americas network and has translated this commitment into concrete actions for socioeconomic integration. One such example is the professional training programme, developed in partnership with UNHCR and

the social organization Casa de la Mujer de la Unión, offering training opportunities to refugees, asylum-seekers, and individuals in need of international protection. The majority of participants are women who, through these workshops, acquire labour competencies aligned with the demands of the labour market, expand their support networks, and strengthen their economic autonomy.

These initiatives benefit from the technical and logistical support of the Municipality of Montevideo, which provides facilities and coordinates with other state actors. Upon renewing its commitment to the Cities of Solidarity in the Americas initiative in August 2023, the Uruguayan capital reaffirmed its determination to continue promoting inclusive public policies, based on inter-institutional collaboration and a rights-based approach, so that those who have been displaced may find in the city a safe, accessible, and prosperous

environment.

The following six good practices have been identified, along with their main results, challenges, and lessons learned:

- 1. Labour inclusion of refugees and migrants through training**
- 2. Inter-institutional alliance between civil society, departmental government, and international organizations**
- 3. Support networks and comprehensive approaches in training processes**
- 4. Official certification as a tool for inclusion and employability**
- 5. Comprehensive approach to the needs of participants in training spaces**
- 6. Integration of primary education accreditation in labour training processes**



The alliance between UNHCR, Casa de la Mujer de La Unión and the Municipality of Montevideo, key to the training of migrants and refugees.  
© Intendencia de Montevideo

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*If Casa de la Mujer de la Unión gave you the opportunity, if you are giving yourself the opportunity, then the only thing left to do is to put good vibes, attitude and dedication into it.*

”

**Arlette García Rosales**

*Participant of the courses at Casa de la Mujer*

# 1.

## Labour Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants through Training

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**Life in displacement situations often risks becoming a "life on hold", where skills and resources are not adequately utilized, either due to limited opportunities or because psychosocial challenges such as anxiety or loss of hope for the future prevail. The project implemented by Casa de la Mujer de la Unión promotes the economic autonomy of migrants, refugees, and local populations through training courses, fostering their self-reliance and responding to specific demands of the labour market.**

### General description

The technical training initiative developed by Casa de la Mujer de la Unión (CMU) promotes the labour inclusion of refugees, migrants, and other vulnerable individuals through certified training programmes with a strong component of engagement with the labour market. Its main objective is to create real conditions for access to employment by providing concrete tools to enhance the employability of participants. With a design centered on the trajectories and capacities of each individual, the programme combines training processes with various

courses: Customer Service, Sales with Logistics Knowledge, E-commerce, Training for Community Pharmacy Assistants, and Care for Dependent Persons —this last course being certified by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) —, along with active strategies that facilitate participants' integration into the labour market. Throughout the process, both technical skills and key cross-cutting competencies for the workplace are strengthened. Between 2020 and 2024, 18 training courses were implemented, incorporating

labour intermediation tools, establishing links with companies, and facilitating concrete opportunities for insertion in sectors with a high demand for labour.





# Labour Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants through Training

## Results of the good practices

- Between 2020 and 2024, 18 courses were carried out in areas of high labor demand, such as Dependency Care, Customer Service, Community Care for Children, E-commerce and Training for Qualified Community Pharmacists.
- A total of 394 participants from Montevideo, Canelones and San José took part in the training.
- Approximately 60% of graduates accessed employment opportunities or selection processes linked to their training.
- Practical internships were carried out in care institutions as part of the curriculum in the Care for Dependent Persons course, within the framework of the National Integrated Care System of Uruguay (Sistema Nacional de Cuidados).
- More than 30 companies participated annually in labor linkage activities, expanding concrete employment opportunities for those who completed the courses.
- Within the Community Childcare Training course, designed by Casa de la Mujer de la Unión and the Municipality of Montevideo, 30 women were trained, of whom 3 accessed specific employment positions in the childcare facilities of the Municipality of Montevideo.

## Challenges in Implementation

- Initiating training courses during periods with a high supply of seasonal jobs made it difficult for participants to see the value in investing time in training that promised long-term employability.
- The diversity of profiles regarding age, work experience, educational background, and migration status required flexible approaches in the design and delivery of the training courses.
- Structural barriers to accessing quality formal employment persisted, especially among individuals whose qualifications were not recognized locally or who had recently arrived.



Inclusion in the labour market: a horizon of hope for refugees.  
© UNHCR/Markel Redondo

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***This training has given me the necessary tools to start my working life here***

”

***Danairys Díaz***

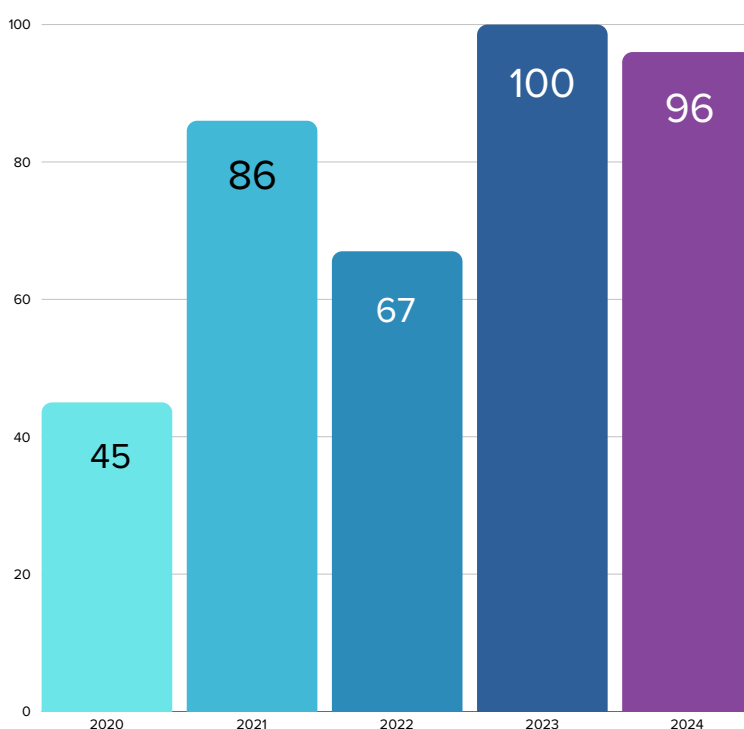
*Graduate of the Community Pharmacy Qualification Course*

# Labour Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants through Training

## Lessons Learned

- The close and personalised accompaniment helped to increase the permanence in the courses and facilitated the transition to employment.
- Previous interviews and diagnoses improved the match between the profiles of the participants and the training proposals, favouring better results.
- Planning the training courses based on the local labour market calendar helped reduce dropouts and maximize subsequent employability.
- Articulation with private companies strengthened effective inclusion opportunities following the completion of the training courses.
- The labor market is dynamic, changing, and highly demanding, requiring constant updating of the training offerings. In response to this reality, in 2024, Casa de la Mujer de la Unión incorporated new training courses aligned with market needs, such as the Training for Community Pharmacy Assistants.
- The strengthening of post-course support improved the conditions for labour market insertion. Starting in 2024, follow-up actions were implemented for at least 50% of the graduates, which included the joint elaboration of an action itinerary, orientation interviews, CV review and job search support.

## Number of participants per year



Source: Prepared by the Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Policies Area of the MI based on administrative data from Casa de la Mujer de La Unión.

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*They gave us very useful tools to be able to start our work, with empathy and consideration. Thanks to the training, many of us are already working using all the tools we were given.*

”

**Dania Caballero Reinoso**

*Qualified in training in Care for Dependency within the framework of the Integrated National Care System (SNIC).*

# 2.

## Inter-institutional Alliance between Civil Society, Departmental Government, and International Organizations

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**Casa de la Mujer de la Unión consolidated a strategic inter-institutional alliance with UNHCR and the Municipality of Montevideo to offer job training courses with institutional backing, facilitating access to formal employment opportunities for migrants and refugees.**

### General Description

As a result of the joint work between civil society, international organisations and local authorities, a training model for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees were implemented with official recognition. Casa de la Mujer de la Unión articulated with UNHCR and the Municipality of Montevideo both the design and the execution of the courses, achieving their formal validation before the Ministry of Education and Culture -in the case of the course on Dependency Care- and the Municipality of Montevideo - for the course on Food Handling-. This validation increases the possibilities of labour insertion of the participants, giving legitimacy and value to the training.

In addition to the technical and financial support from UNHCR, the Municipality of Montevideo provided institutional backing and actively contributed to sustaining participation: transportation allowances were provided, along with referrals to food assistance programmes [1] and other resources, enabling those facing complex economic situations to complete their training. This practice demonstrates how inter-institutional coordination can generate practical and sustainable solutions for the labour inclusion of individuals in situations of human mobility. Through the alliance with the Municipality of Montevideo, high-demand courses were coordinated,

such as the Basic Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Defibrillator Use course.

Additionally, referrals were made to departmental public policy responses in housing, through transitional housing solutions such as the Proyecto Guadalupe [2], and participation was promoted in other programmes, including healthy eating courses, attendance at public cultural events, and articulation with Spanish language education initiatives offered by various public institutions.



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[1] The ABC Food Support Programme of the Municipality of Montevideo is an initiative that provides food and nutritional assistance to vulnerable populations through the delivery of food, supplements, nutritional education and family support.

[2] The Guadalupe Project (in Montevideo, Uruguay) is a transitional housing solutions programme managed mainly by the Municipality of Montevideo. It is aimed at migrants who have recently entered Montevideo. The main objective of the project is to provide temporary housing in decent conditions while people find a more stable housing solution: <https://montevideo.gub.uy/noticias/sociedad/respuesta-habitacional-transitoria-para-personas-migrantes>.

# Inter-institutional Alliance between Civil Society, Departmental Government, and International Organizations

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## Results of the good practice

- Certification from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) for the Care for Dependent Persons course, within the area of Care.
- Certification from the Municipality of Montevideo for the Food Handling course.
- Annual development of a Primary Education Accreditation course, in alliance with the General Direction of Initial and Primary Education (DGEIP) and the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- 100% of participants received transportation support from the Municipality of Montevideo to ensure attendance at training courses.
- The process to request land for the establishment of a housing cooperative was initiated, with support from the Municipality of Montevideo.

## Challenges in Implementation

- Uncertainty regarding external funding, particularly in 2025, affected the timely planning and execution of some activities.
- Coordination among diverse actors, with different rhythms and approaches, posed a challenge for maintaining constant and effective collaboration.

## Lessons learned

- Complementarity among institutional actors is fundamental to achieving greater impact and effectiveness.
- Socioeconomic support, such as transportation and food assistance, is key to facilitating continued participation in the training courses.



Teacher at Casa de la Mujer in La Unión.  
© UNHCR/Markel Redondo



***We come from a very different country; receiving this training here, knowing the laws, the rights and learning how to do it, made it much easier for us to get a job.***



***Dania Caballero Reinoso***

*Graduate of training in Care for Dependency within the framework of the National Integrated Care System (SNIC).*



# 3.

## Support Networks and Comprehensive Approaches in Training Processes

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**The implementation of training courses by Casa de la Mujer de la Unión not only aims to improve the employability conditions of migrants and refugees but also serves as a space for collective building, mutual support, and emotional strengthening.**

### General Description

From the beginning, a comprehensive work approach was promoted, where trainings function as a safe space that favours the bond between peers, fosters trust and enables the exchange of shared experiences.

This approach facilitates the construction of support networks among participants, resulting in a significant improvement in their permanence, motivation, and engagement with the training processes.

Psychosocial support, personalised referrals to specialised services and constant monitoring through individual interviews and tutorials allow for a person-centred approach, taking into consideration the multiple dimensions of their life trajectories.

Furthermore, the training courses provide opportunities for participants to share experiences, voice concerns, and feel recognized in their personal journeys, contributing to greater trust and a stronger sense of

belonging within the group.

This human dimension of the project, backed by a technical team with intercultural sensitivity and a rights-based approach, has been key to consolidating a supportive community among participants and strengthening personal autonomy.



# Support Networks and Comprehensive Approaches in Training Processes

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## Results of the good practices

- Autonomous support and exchange networks were generated, and training groups maintained their connections after completing the courses.
- 100% of the training sessions included group dynamics and activities aimed at fostering connections among participants and the creation of safe spaces.
- More than 15 linkages were established with health services, social programmes, and other organizations to address specific situations comprehensively.
- Access to social services, psychological support, and personalized career guidance was facilitated through more than 50 individual support sessions for course participants.
- In at least four training sessions, it was documented that groups maintained collective communication channels (such as WhatsApp groups), facilitating mutual support after the courses had concluded.

## Challenges in Implementation

- The personal backgrounds and needs of the participants were very diverse, which made it challenging to offer a comprehensive accompaniment that responded to all realities.
- Some participants faced technological or logistical barriers that limited their ability to continue with the course or to maintain follow-up afterward.

## Lessons learned

- Group assessments were implemented at the beginning of each course, which allowed for the identification of specific barriers and the design of adapted strategies, such as personalised tutoring, psychosocial support or assistance with paperwork.
- Access to digital tools was guaranteed, and when this was not possible, face-to-face alternatives or printed materials were offered. In addition, meeting spaces were created to strengthen group links from the beginning.
- Strategies were promoted to ensure that support networks could continue autonomously, such as messaging groups and informal gatherings, and leadership among some graduates was encouraged to sustain these spaces.



Proudly displaying the certificate: the finishing touch to training. © Intendencia de Montevideo



he Mayor of Montevideo Mauricio Zunino at the presentation of the certificates. © Intendencia de Montevideo



# 4.

## Official certification as a tool for inclusion and employability

The formal recognition of skills acquired through training processes is key to improving the employability of migrants and refugees. In this regard, coordination with public institutions such as the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and the Municipality of Montevideo has made it possible to incorporate official certifications that validate knowledge and facilitate access to formal employment in specific areas such as care services and food handling.

### General Description

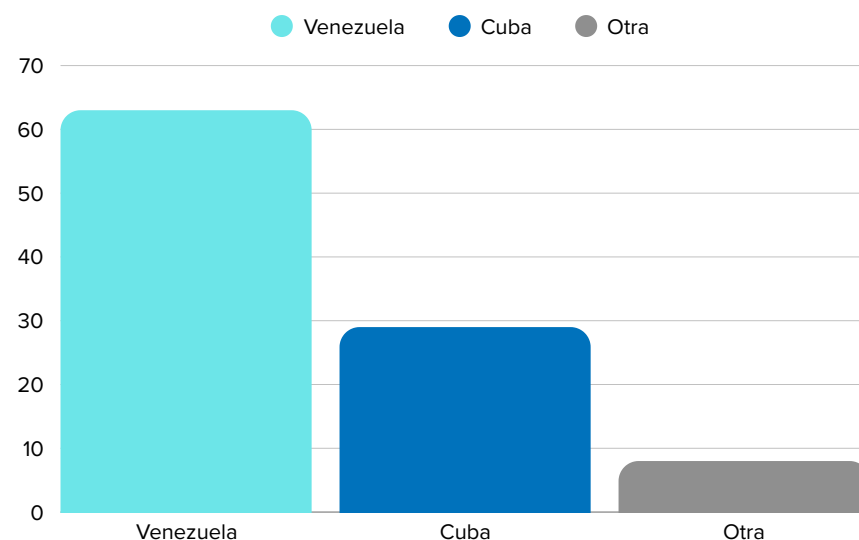
The training project promoted by Casa de la Mujer de la Unión has incorporated official certifications through partnerships with government agencies, which has strengthened the training value of its proposals. The courses in the area of Care have the recognition of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), which allows the graduates to receive an official certification that endorses their competences in care for dependent persons. This recognition not only legitimises their training but also increases their chances of entering the formal labour market.

In addition, coordination with the Municipality of Montevideo facilitated access to the Food Handling Certificate, which is legally required to work in the food sector. A specific two-day course with a final evaluation was organized, enabling 24 participants to obtain the certificate.

Priority was given to those already enrolled in commercial training courses, followed by individuals from the care area, ensuring direct and effective application in their career trajectories. This certification component responds to a strategy of continuous improvement in the quality and relevance of the training

offered, allowing migrants and refugees not only to acquire knowledge, but also to have their knowledge officially recognised. This practice strengthens their professional profile, broadens their employment opportunities and contributes to their economic autonomy in the host country.

### Country of origin



Source: Prepared by the Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Policies Area of the MI based on administrative data from Casa de la Mujer de La Unión.



# Official certification as a tool for inclusion and employability

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## Results of the good practice

- Training courses in the Care area have been certified by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), providing participants with greater formal recognition.
- The care for dependent persons course curriculum was expanded, allowing participants to access the Food Handling Certificate, an essential requirement for employment in the gastronomic sector and other areas related to food handling.

## Challenges in Implementation

- Institutional coordination with diverse actors to achieve official certification within a tight timeframe and with available resources.
- The high demand to participate in the courses showed the sustained interest of migrants and refugees in accessing tools to enhance their employability. However, the limited availability of places made it necessary to establish criteria that allowed for a strategic allocation, maximising the impact on those whose training trajectories were already underway in related areas.
- The logistical requirements of the course - such as attendance, final assessment and teacher availability - required detailed planning and careful coordination to ensure its quality and effectiveness.

## Lessons Learned

- The official certification, both from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and the Municipality of Montevideo, represents a concrete tool for the improvement of employment opportunities and is highly valued by the participants.
- Coordination among institutions (Municipality of Montevideo, Casa de la Mujer de la Unión, and UNHCR) was key to delivering a high-quality training experience within the community space itself.
- Prioritising people according to their training process (for example, those who were already studying related areas) favoured the use of the instance and its relevance.
- The design of clear, accessible calls for applications, together with reminders and ongoing support, improved attendance and the effective use of these training opportunities.

“

***The teachers adapted to us, even though we were all of different nationalities. They never said no to a question we asked them.***

*Graduate of training in Dependency Care*

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# 5.

## Comprehensive approach to the needs of participants in training spaces

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**The target population of the initiatives developed by Casa de la Mujer de la Unión (CMU) during this period largely consisted of migrants and refugees from various countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, often facing economic hardship, housing insecurity, or limited access to basic services. These conditions generated the need for CMU not only to provide technical training, but also to develop a broader support strategy.**

### General Description

During the period 2020-2024, Casa de la Mujer de La Unión (CMU) incorporated a sustained approach to multiple social, economic and emotional needs as a fundamental part of its training and support proposal for migrants and refugees. This comprehensive perspective allowed for the creation of more equitable conditions for participation and permanence in the training processes, favouring access to rights.

The technical team of CMU developed sustained actions of active listening and accompaniment, generating

bonds of trust that allowed the early identification of situations that required specific responses. Referrals and articulations were made with various services in the territory: mental health situations were referred to State Health Services Administration (ASSE for its acronym in Spanish) and municipal health services; cases of gender-based violence were addressed together with the Comuna Mujer [3] of Municipality D and the territorial teams of MIDES; situations of food insecurity were channelled with state programmes; and for consultations related to

migration procedures and regularisation, coordination was established with civil society organisations. This coordination was accompanied by clear, accessible and emphatic communication about available resources, thus strengthening the autonomy of the participants.



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[3] The Comunas Mujer (Women's Communes) are free and confidential care spaces for women who suffer gender-based violence in Montevideo. They offer legal and psychosocial counselling services to help women get out of situations of violence, taking into account their needs and support networks.

# Comprehensive approach to the needs of participants in training spaces

## Results of the good practice

- Referrals and coordination were established with services for mental health support, gender-based violence assistance, food security, and migration documentation, including linkages with state bodies and civil society organizations.
- The CMU technical team provided continuous guidance on rights and access to resources, maintaining permanent dialogue with the needs expressed by participants.
- The role of Casa de la Mujer de la Unión as a territorial reference actor for the comprehensive support of migrants and refugees was strengthened, based on institutional and community recognition of the work carried out.

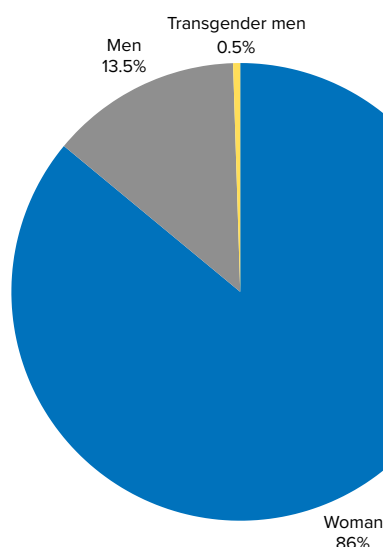
## Challenges in Implementation

- The sustained demand for support in the face of multiple vulnerability situations required significant human and institutional efforts, presenting the challenge of securing more resources to sustain this comprehensive approach over time.
- Structural difficulties persist in accessing basic rights for migrants and refugees, such as healthcare, food security, and housing, requiring the continual updating of coordination networks and a deepening of inter-institutional collaboration.

## Lessons Learned

- Coordination with other institutional and community actors at the territorial level is key to providing comprehensive responses to the multiple needs faced by migrant and refugee populations, and to avoid the burden falling exclusively on a single organization.
- Building trustful relationships and practicing active listening are fundamental to encouraging participants to share their needs, access training spaces, and remain engaged.
- A flexible approach is necessary, one that can adapt to the complex realities of participants, integrating emotional support, rights guidance, and assistance in urgent situations.

Gender identity of total participants



“It was not only training in community pharmacy, it was also training in the duties and rights of work here in Uruguay”

**Libianis León**  
Graduate of the  
Community Pharmacy  
Qualification Course

# 6.

## Integration of Primary Education Accreditation in Labour Training Processes

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**Primary education accreditation is aimed at young people and adults who did not complete their studies at that level, allowing them to obtain an official certificate that validates the knowledge acquired throughout their lives. This certification, promoted by the Public National Education Administration (ANEP for its acronym in Spanish), opens the possibility of resuming educational pathways, accessing better employment opportunities, and fulfilling various legal or administrative requirements.**

### General Description

During training activities at the Casa de la Mujer de la Unión, a primary education accreditation process was carried out for individuals who did not possess the corresponding certification or revalidation. The implementation of this practice was carried out in coordination with the General Direction of Initial and Primary Education (DGEIP for its acronym in Spanish). The process included the appointment of a teacher who participated in specific training sessions to fulfill that role.

Moreover, accreditation was not limited to the day of the exam but involved prior support through remedial and learning reinforcement sessions.

This instance was enabled for all the training groups, although its obligatory nature varied: in the area of Care for Dependency it was required in the absence of revalidation, while in the Commercial area it was subject to the decision of the participants. This practice allowed CMU participants to regularise their educational trajectory,

integrating training in occupations and community knowledge with the completion of primary education in the same training process.





# Integration of Primary Education Accreditation in Labour Training Processes

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## Results of the good practice

- 250 participants completed the primary school accreditation test and passed, obtaining the official certification issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC).
- The formal educational dimension was integrated into the training processes for employment, which favoured educational continuity and improved job opportunities.

## Challenges in Implementation

- Difficulties in the access to the test for people without valid or updated documentation, such as the Uruguayan identity card.
- For some people, personal insecurities arose in the face of the evaluation process, perceived as distant or as something they had already overcome in their life history.
- The coordination of agendas and additional tasks to ensure accompaniment prior to the exam meant an extra operational effort for the territorial teams.

## Lessons learned

- Preparation prior to accreditation, both in terms of content and emotional and pedagogical support, was key to encouraging participation.
- The experience showed that integrating formal education with job training enhances the processes of inclusion and expands people's rights.
- The importance of working in a coordinated and cooperative manner with state educational bodies, such as the General Direction of Initial and Primary Education (DGEIP) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), to guarantee accessible, sustained and quality certification processes, was reaffirmed.



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